

ALABAMA ATTORNEY GENERAL TROY KING



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From the Desk of the Attorney General

Over the course of the last thirty years, victims across Alabama have witnessed great progress as our criminal justice system has begun to realize and recognize that those who are dragged into the system deserve at least as many rights as those who dragged them there. During those thirty years, we have seen so much progress that, today, it is inconceivable to imagine that it could have ever been different. For example, it is hard for us to imagine now that there was a time when Alabama's victims were shut out of the courtroom and the judicial proceedings which touched their lives in such painful, powerful, and, too often, permanent ways. A few survivors across our state who refused to stand idly by and allow the system to desecrate the memories of someone they loved with its callousness. Today, victims have a right to be present at each step of the cases that are, after all, brought, in many ways, on their behalf. To be sure, many of the rights victims now enjoy were far too slow in coming. Too many mothers and fathers sat outside a courtroom and wondered and worried about whether their child's murderer or rapist was being held fully to account. Those days are over. There are many inadequacies that remain in our system that we continue to fight to address, such as the woeful lack of funding for victim services, the shameful lack of any meaningful way to enforce the victim's bill of rights, a good time law that makes a mockery of sentences, and a parole system that traumatizes victims as it requires them to relive crimes that, while they can never be forgotten, would be better left as an undisturbed bad memory.

For all this progress, however, during the last session of the Alabama Legislature, we were reminded that there were powerful forces in Montgomery that continue to side with criminals over justice and victims. On the last day of the Regular Session of the Alabama Legislature, the Alabama Medical Furlough Act was passed. In another short sighted attempt to reduce prison costs and crowding, victims in Alabama are likely to see justice snatched from them by those put in positions of power to protect them. This legislation allows three categories of inmates – those who are 55 years of age or older and who suffer from a

threatening infirmity or illness or a chronic, debilitating disease related to aging, those inmates with an existing medical condition which is not terminal but who are permanently and irreversibly incapacitated, and those inmates who are terminally ill - to qualify for consideration by the Commissioner of the Alabama Department of Corrections for a special, new medical furlough release. While

no inmate convicted of capital murder is eligible for this get out of jail free card, there are many who have been convicted of horrible and brutal crimes who will be. The authority to make determinations regarding whether an inmate will be granted this new extraordinary relief is vested solely in the commissioner. We pray that it will be exercised with restraint.

All of us will be eagerly watching to see how this new bill, which was part of Governor Riley's legislative package, is implemented.

Many of us, caught off guard at the last moment by the passage of this bill, made a last minute stand to defeat it. Those in favor of it simply possessed too much political strength and momentum to be stopped. The passage of this legislation should be a frightening call to return to arms for victims. It should remind us that the deck that already seems to be stacked against us is, sometimes, also a marked deck. It is a reminder that for all the years spent fighting for truth in sentencing, with the passage of this legislation, Alabama has taken another step away from that noble goal of ending the shell game and making sentences in this state mean what they say. Let us return to the battlements and raise our guard again lest we see further, successful attempts to erode and undermine a system that, too often, already fails its victims. I will meet you there!



Understanding the Alabama Board of Pardons and Paroles

By: Pete Smyczek



The Alabama Board of Pardons and Paroles consists of three members, including one chairman who is designated by the Governor. The term of members of the Board are for six years. The Board has the exclusive authority to grant pardons and paroles and to forgive fines and forfeitures, and to determine which prisoners serving in the jails and prisons of this state are eligible for such, and under what conditions. The Board has no power to grant pardon or parole in cases of treason and impeachment, and in cases in which a sentence of death is imposed and not commuted by the Governor.

The Board is also charged with the duty of supervising all prisoners released on parole from the jails or prisons of the state and with lending its assistance to the courts in the supervision of all prisoners placed on probation by trial courts. It is also the responsibility of the Board to study the prisoners confined in the jails and prisons of the state so as to determine their ultimate fitness to be paroled.

The Board has the authority to adopt rules and regulations not inconsistent with their duties and powers.

Between October 1 and December 31 of each year, the Board is required to make a full report of its activities and functions during the previous year. A copy of the report is filed with the Governor, the Secretary of State, the Department of Archives and History, and one copy is kept by the Board.

Public Meetings of the Board.

Meetings of the Board of Pardons and Paroles are held when called by the chairman or as otherwise determined by the Board. Meetings are held for the purpose of conducting hearings and making determinations concerning pardons, paroles, restorations of political and civil rights, excusing fines and forfeitures, and revocations of parole. Before the Board may approve or grant any pardon, parole, discharge of a fine or other penalty, the following conditions must be met:

- (1) The action of the Board must be taken in an open public meeting, and
- (2) 30 days advance notice of the time, date, and place of the meeting and the action to be considered must have been given, in writing, sent by U. S. mail, electronic transmission, or by another common method of delivery to:
 - a. The Attorney General.
 - b. The district attorney who prosecuted and the judge who presided over the case (or their successor in office).
 - c. The chief of police of the municipality wherein the crime occurred (if the crime was committed in a municipality with a police department)
 - d. The sheriff of the county in which the crime was committed.
 - e. Notice to these same officials of the county where the crime occurred if different from the county of conviction

- (3) All of the above persons who are required to be notified are allowed, at their option, to either appear before the board or give their views in writing.

The written notice provided by the Board must include the following:

- (1) The name of the prisoner or defendant involved.
- (2) The crime for which the prisoner or defendant was convicted.
- (3) The action to be considered by the Board
- (4) The court in which the conviction occurred.
- (5) The sentence imposed and the actual time in confinement without regard to the operation of any incentive or other good time law, as calculated by the Department of Corrections.
- (6) The date of the sentence.
- (7) The date, time, and location of the Board meeting at which the action is to be considered.
- (8) The right of any interested person to present his views to the Board.

Notice Given to Victim(s)

Unless at least 30 days' written notice has been given by the Board of Pardons and Paroles to the victim named in the indictment, or if the victim is deceased as a result of the offense, the victim's immediate family, the Board shall have no power or authority to order any parole, pardon, discharge of fine or forfeiture, restoration of civil and political rights, furlough, leave or early release of any person convicted of any of the following offenses:

- a. A Class A felony.
- b. Any felony committed prior to the first day of January, 1980, which, if committed after the first day of January, 1980, would be designated as a Class A felony.
- c. Any felony involving violence, death or any physical injury to the person of another.
- d. Any felony involving unlawful sexual assault or other unlawful sexual conduct on the person of another.
- e. Any felony involving sexual assault, or a lewd or lascivious act upon a child under the age of 16 years or attempt thereof.
- f. Sexual abuse or any other criminal conduct committed prior to the first day of January, 1980, which if committed after the first day of January, 1980, would be defined as sexual abuse under the Alabama Criminal Code.
- g. Child abuse or any criminal conduct committed prior to the first day of January, 1980, which if committed after the first day of January, 1980, would be defined as child abuse under the Alabama Criminal Code.
- h. Sodomy or any criminal conduct committed prior to the 1st day of January, 1980, which if committed after the 1st day of January, 1980, would be defined as sodomy under the Alabama Criminal Code.
- i. Any violation of Section 13A-6-69, as amended.

(2.) The notice must be given by U.S. mail, certified mail, return receipt requested, and must include:

- a. The name of the prisoner or defendant involved.
- b. The crime for which the prisoner or defendant was convicted.
- c. The date of the sentence.
- d. The court in which the conviction occurred.
- e. The sentence imposed.

Part 1 of a 3 Part Series

f. The actual time the prisoner has been held in confinement, as computed by the Department of Corrections, without regard to the operation of any incentive good time, or other good time laws.

g. The action to be considered by the Board.

h. The date, time, and location of the Board meeting at which the action is to be considered.

i. A statement that all victims or their families that are notified are allowed, at their option, to either appear before the Board or give their views in writing.

The Board must make reasonable efforts to locate victims and notify them of hearings. If all attempts to locate a victim have failed and the agent of the Board has certified that reasonable efforts have been made, the Board is not required to locate the victim in the future. At any time the victim may contact the Board and request that the Board notify the victim of all future hearings.

If the victim is a child, the notice must then be given to the parents of the victim, or in the event there is no parent, to the guardian of the victim. If the victim was a minor at the time of the offense, but has attained the age of 19 by the time the notice is sent, the notice is to be sent to the victim. However, if the victim is deceased as a result of the offense, the notice must be given to the surviving members of the victim's immediate family, or in the event there is no immediate family, to a relative of the victim, if any.

The victim may request not to be notified. If the victim requests not to be notified, a certified notice shall be sent to the victim confirming that request and advising him or her that no further notices of Board hearings shall be sent unless he or she subsequently contacts the Board and submits a written request to be notified of hearings in the future.

If, after an open public hearing, the Board takes any action with regards to a pardon or parole, the Board must promptly notify the Attorney General, the judge and the district attorney who tried the case, the chief of police of the crime was committed in an incorporated area, and the sheriff of the county where the prisoner was convicted. The Board must notify these parties of any action taken by the Board, and any conditions imposed upon a prisoner pardoned or paroled. In addition, notice must be given to the victim with regards to any action taken where the prisoner was convicted of a crime listed in a-i above.

The Mother's Day — I Will Never Forget**By Patricia Riley Jones**

"Mother's Day, 1990, Why is it so important?" you may ask. You see, that's the last time my five brothers ever saw my mother alive. She was murdered eight (8) days later in her home. On Mother's Day, we all gathered at Mother's home. The week before, Mother baked tea cakes for everyone, even icing some for the grandchildren. She cooked all kinds of food for lunch, trying to cook a favorite dish for all. She was the happiest I had ever seen her. We made pictures outside in front of some of her flowers. Her flowers were the prettiest I had ever seen. She had wild petunias blooming in the field beside the house. They had never bloomed there before. It's like God knew what the future held and He gave us a day to remember with Mother.

Mother was murdered in her home, May 21, 1990. I found her the next morning about 6:30. My life has never been the same. When I saw her body through the kitchen screen door, lying in a pool of blood, I still had hope. I thought that she had fallen and hit the kitchen table and was hemorrhaging. When I walked around the table and was going to try to find a pulse on her, I saw the dried blood on her face and the enormous pool of blood and knew that Mother was dead. There was no hope. I said, "God you've got to help me, you've got to give me strength." I felt God take me in the palm of His hand and he has carried me there ever since. As tragic as this was, I saw God's hand in so many ways. This alone could be another story.

I called the law enforcement and, like everyone else, thought that the judicial system would take care of us. I do have a lot to be thankful for; the two who murdered Mother were arrested about three hours after I found her. I knew the murder had to be someone who knew Mother lived alone. I didn't think that anyone just drove by and randomly picked her house. The third person I called that morning, a neighbor, told me that the guy that had been cutting her grass that year had been using dope in Florida previously. When I was questioned by the ABI in his car that morning, I was only asked to tell them what happened from the last time I talked to Mother the night before until I found her. I did this and as I was getting out of his car, I remembered what the neighbor had told me. I shared with him my thoughts, not accusing anyone, but my suspicion. He called the Deputy Sheriff over and I told him. The Deputy immediately went to find the yardman. When he arrived at his door, he admitted to the horrible crime. He said that he and his friend had been riding around, drinking beer, and doing crack. They wanted more crack but needed money. They went several places before deciding to come to Mother's house and try to borrow money. He said that she let them in the house. There was no sign of forced entry. He asked to borrow \$20 and she told him she didn't have it. She knew she needed what she had to live on the rest of the month.

Then they asked her for a drink of water. She went to the refrigerator to get the cold water and that's when they attacked her.

The autopsy showed she had been strangled and then stabbed in the throat with his pocket knife when it broke. His accomplice then handed him a stainless steel knife from the kitchen counter. They left her to die in her own kitchen. They stole her purse, having some money and checks in it and also a little black book "Promises For Mothers", that we had given her for Mother's Day. They



drove about 8 miles from there on the opposite side of Abbeville to a dirt road. One got out of the car with the purse and threw everything out of it looking for money. They threw the purse out and went home.

I tried to call Mother that night about 10:40. We were to go to Dothan the next morning for my sister-in-law's surgery. I couldn't get her, but I didn't think anything about it. I thought she was asleep. She had been dead for about an hour. I found her the next morning about 6:30 on my way to Dothan. I had tried to call her 3 times that morning. Yes, I found her. Yes, it was horrible and traumatic. Our family also had to clean up the crime scene. My husband and my sisters-in laws did this for us. As they were cleaning up the pool of blood, my sister-in-law found the broken knife blade, she gave it to my husband and he carried it to the Sheriff's Office. The two men were arrested about 3 hours after I found Mother. The law enforcement thought they had everything they needed and so did we until we had to go to the preliminary hearing to find they had no fingerprints. All the evidence hadn't been processed by the crime lab and guess what, they weren't doing DNA at that time, except at one crime lab, but not at the one that was processing our evidence. Four of our family members had to be witnesses at the preliminary hearing. The defendants didn't have to take the stand. We felt like we were the ones on trial. We later had to go to the Grand Jury. Our family has endured 5 murder trials in less than 4 years, not counting the numerous motion hearings, change of venue, etc. After 2 trials in Abbeville, we had to go to Montgomery for 3 trials. I had the "best ever" Victims Service Officer, Mrs. Nita Hogg, for our 2 trials in Abbeville. She was an angel. We also had the best District Attorney in Alabama, Doug Valeska. He doesn't believe in plea bargaining and he let's the family feel as if their opinions are important. When I went to Montgomery which is almost 100 miles away, I felt so lost because my VSO couldn't go with us. I had met Miriam Shehane and several others at the candlelight vigil in 1991 in Montgomery. I thought this is such a great group that would do something like this for me to remember my mother.

But, it was at the trials that I really learned about VOCAL (Victims Of Crime And Leniency). Miriam came everyday and stayed with us for the 3 trials held in Montgomery. Each trial lasted a week. One day she couldn't come and she got Doris Dease to come. One day, I wanted to go to the church across the street to pray. She didn't know the people there, but she went with me and asked permission for me to pray there. She was my ANGEL at that time and gave

Our family the support we needed away from home. I thank God for Miriam Shehane and VOCAL. Miriam's daughter, Quenette, was murdered December 20th, 1976. She and a few other crime victims started VOCAL in November of 1982. It is a support group for victims of crime.

One the defendants (Willie McNair) had 2 trials and received the death penalty both times. He is the one that admitted to the murder. We followed him to the 8th appeal at the Federal Level. Judge Myron Thompson heard his appeal July 2000 and sat on it until March 12, 2004, reversing it for retrial. The Attorney General's Office appealed to the 11th circuit in Atlanta. It was heard May 6, 2005, almost 15 years after her murder. On July 12, 2005, the federal appeals court reversed the district court's ruling, denying the petition both on the basis of ineffective counsel and all other grounds. McNair's attorneys appealed to the 11th Circuit in Atlanta and wanted all 12 judges to hear the appeal instead of 3. This was denied September 14, 2005. What we thought was the last appeal to the US Supreme Court was also denied in April of 2006. We thought the next step was to set an execution date. You never know what surprises are awaiting you in the Criminal JUSTICE System. His attorneys filed an appeal August 7, 2006, arguing that the lethal injection is cruel and inhumane. District Judge William Keith Watkins has granted him a hearing on this. The Attorney General's Office requested an execution date on May 15, 2007. It is also caught up in the US Supreme Court hearing the argument of the 2 Kentucky lethal injection cases, in which they agreed to hear in October of 2007

The other defendant (Olin Grimsley) had 3 trials and received a life sentence for ROBBERY charges, not capital murder, not even murder, thanks to a Montgomery County jury. We faced him in numerous appeals and fought him at the parole hearing September 2004. This was probably the most stressful ordeal that I have had to endure. Getting letters, petitions, and asking people to attend the parole hearing and begging the 3 person parole board to not let this murderer out. The night before; I could not sleep, my heart felt like it would burst open. I could feel my pulse on my pillow. It was denied for 5 years but we will be back there in 2009. He can come up before that if the Parole Board so desires. This was the guy that I felt was the instigator of Mother's Murder. He just never seems to give up. Before I even left Montgomery that day of the parole hearing, I received a call from DA Doug Valeska wanting me to go talk to the Attorney General's Office about a cigarette butt from the crime scene over 14 years had past. Olin Grimsley never gave up on saying that he wasn't there. He had convinced the Wisconsin School of Law that he was innocent. They filed a Federal lawsuit against DA Doug Valeska for the cigarette butt to be sent to a crime lab in California to be processed for DNA.

In 1990, DNA was not being done very much. It was fairly new. The lab where the evidence in our case was sent, didn't do DNA. They did the next best thing, a test that tested the saliva off the cigarette butt, and showed what blood type, H secretor factor. Oh, if only we had DNA done 14 years ago, Grimsley might not have gotten off with only robbery charges. DNA was done in California and in March, 2005, it proved he was there. It doesn't do us any good, we don't have the right to appeal to a new trial or even if he should

get a new trial, he can only be tried for robbery, nothing greater. Just recently (February 19, 2008), I found out that he is still appealing/arguing or whatever you call it.

Alabama Court of Criminal Appeals had denied his request to be reclassified. He says that he is not a heinous offender out that he is still appealing/arguing or whatever you call it.

I received a call from the Attorney General's Office where the as he has been classified. He is also trying to get on the work release program. We wondered what happened to the law of accomplice and sometimes we wonder "is there any justice?"

It is very traumatic reliving the murder of your loved one. You have to believe in the death penalty and believe that it is a deterrent to crime. Yes, it is a lot of torture on the victim's family. I feel that it is necessary to stand up for justice for the VICTIM. With God by my side, I will survive. I also could not have made it without the support of the Attorney General's Office. They have been a blessing to explain and support our family through all the appeals. Attorney General Troy King has stood by victims like no other during my 18 years of dealing with the criminal justice system. He has definitely stood up for crime victims and the many programs that he has started or endorsed have been positive for us. He endorses a crime bill package each year during legislation.

So, after almost 18 years, we are still facing the criminal justice system. I can't just bury Mother and visit her grave, put fresh flowers on it and rejoice that she is in heaven; I have to keep reliving her murder over and over. But the day that I found Mother, I said I wanted something good to come out of her murder. I didn't want her death to be in vain. What I wanted to happen has not happened yet, which was to see my five (5) brothers become Christians, but I'm still praying for them. I guess God had other plans for something good. He allowed me to take the early retirement from Ft. Rucker, Alabama, Feb. 1995. I had to take a 14% cut by retiring early. I had worked there for almost 30 years. In May 1995, I started the Southeast Alabama VOCAL Chapter in Dothan in memory of Mother. I volunteer; this is not a paid position. Through the chapter, we attend trials and protest paroles of the defendant with the victim's family. We have attended funerals, and taken food to the family's home. We have monthly meetings where we have educational and motivational speakers, sometimes we just meet to talk and eat. We have a party at Christmas for the families with an emphasis on the children. We also have a candlelight vigil or memorial service in April. I have also been a part of opening "VOCAL Angel House" in Montgomery in 1999 and Wiregrass Angel House in 2004. Through this we are able to offer more support to homicide victim's families. We have free counseling, do crime scene cleanup, and help families apply for financial help for the funeral and other expenses. I have made many friends that are like my family. Other ways that I remember Mother is planting flowers or making new flower beds in my yard in April during National Crime Victims' Rights Week. My mother's name is Ella Foy Riley. She was 68 years old. She was a wonderful Christian lady that I miss so much, especially on Mother's Day!

The Age Of A Case Is No Longer A Bar To The Efforts To Obtain Justice

If you are aware of an old or cold case that you would like to have considered for acceptance into this Unit, contact your local law enforcement agency and ask them to review the case for its appropriateness for referral to this Unit. Once the required referral has been received, it will be presented to the Cold Case Review Committee of the Attorney General's Office. This committee will determine whether the case meets the established criteria for acceptance into the Cold Case Unit. We look forward to bringing important resources to bear in the quest for justice.

The Jettis Holifield Case

The Alabama Attorney General's Cold Case Unit has successfully resolved the Jettis Holifield case. In May 2007, the Office of the Attorney General, received a request for assistance from Mrs. Melinda Holifield, regarding the homicide of her son, Jettis Holifield, which occurred on September 12, 2000, in Prichard, Alabama. In March 2008, the Cold Case Unit's investigation was presented to the Mobile County grand jury for their consideration. The grand jury returned a true bill of indictment against Tarrance Shavers, charging him with the murder of Jettis Holifield. In April 2008, Shaver was arrested and incarcerated at the Mobile County Jail pending trial. On August 22, 2008, Shavers appeared before Circuit Judge James Wood and entered a guilty plea to the murder charge. Judge Wood immediately sentenced Shavers to a 20 year split sentence.

In addition to the Holifield case, the Cold Case Unit accepted the Judie Wilding case from the Montgomery Police Department in May 2008. Judie Wilding was the owner of the Ani-Mall Pet Store in Montgomery, who disappeared more than eight years ago. Judie Wilding's husband, Albert L. Wilding has remained under suspicion ever since her disappearance. The Cold Case Unit initiated their investigation and was able to obtain evidence which was presented to a Montgomery County grand jury on August 15, 2008. The grand jury returned a true bill of indictment against Albert L. Wilding. Specifically, the indictment charged that Albert L. Wilding intentionally caused the death of Judie Wilding, and that the motive for the murder was financial gain which included proceeds from life insurance and/or other assets. The indictment charged Albert L. Wilding with capital murder, which is punishable by life imprisonment without parole or the death penalty. Albert L. Wilding was arrested on August 19th, 2008 and is currently incarcerated at the Montgomery County Jail awaiting trial.

Solving Cold Cases with DNA

Victims and victim advocates will be happy to know that the Attorney General's Cold Case Unit just received a significant boost. The Office of Attorney General Troy King was recently awarded a Solving Cold Cases with DNA grant from the National Institute of Justice. This grant will provide approximately \$500,000 over 18 months so the Attorney General's Office will review at least one hundred cold cases searching for evidence that can be tested by DNA analysis.

Experienced investigators are critical to solving Cold Cases. This grant will enable us to hire three new employees -- a senior special agent, a special agent, and a special investigator. These agents, along with the prosecutors working with them, will be primarily focused on solving violent sexual assault cold cases in the following counties: Baldwin, Calhoun, Etowah, Lee, Morgan, and Tuscaloosa. The cases that are reviewed and investigated pursuant to this grant will be in addition to the cases that the Attorney General's Cold Case Unit are already reviewing and investigating. William Dill, a deputy attorney general in the Violent Crimes Division, will be supervising their work. Dill is also the lead prosecutor in charge of the Cold Case Unit.

"DNA is a very powerful tool for solving Cold Cases," said General King. "There are too many unsolved rape cases across our state with evidence sitting in a locker room that has not been DNA tested because DNA testing was not available at the time of the investigation. I applied for this grant because I want to bring justice to the victims who have had to live with the fear that the person who raped them is still free to hurt them again, still free to hurt others, and still free from the consequences of their actions. We cannot allow these victims to think that our State has forgotten about them just because many years have passed since they were victimized. I guarantee that the victims and their families have not forgotten what happened -- so neither can we. I will do all within my power to prevent these unsolved crimes from remaining unsolved any longer."

Fortunately, the Alabama Department of Forensic Sciences has agreed to partner with us in this effort. They will utilize their DNA resources and funding to conduct testing of the evidence submitted to them from these Cold Cases. The addition of their expertise and resources ensures that this initiative will be a great success.

A New Direction for the Family Protection Unit

Championing victims is not a job, it's a mission. That philosophy led both Kelly Hawkins and Hallie Dixon to join the Attorney General's fight to protect Alabama's children and elderly, victims who often have no way of protecting themselves. The Family Protection Unit's purpose is to be the voice for the voiceless. Our goal is three-fold:

Educate: to educate our communities, law enforcement and officials about the dangers and the afflictions faced by our most vulnerable Alabamians, about the laws that are enacted to help protect them, and about ways in which to prevent harm to our children and elders.

Legislate: to conceive and push for laws in Alabama that will help us protect our children and elders, as well as to identify areas of the law that can be improved to better protect our children and elders.

Incarcerate: to prosecute those that prey on our most vulnerable and to seek justice for the pain they inflict and the lasting harm they cause.

A Message from Kelly

Dear Friends,

"Now that I have seen, I am responsible. For faith without deeds is dead." In the summer of 1996 at age 15, I was given the gift of sight.....the sight to see the purpose for which I was created. This realization came **when** I met a 4 year old girl with big brown eyes and long brown hair. She was a student at the day care where I worked every day after school as a teacher's assistant. Each day this child would beg to go home with me and each day she would leave to go home to face pain and suffering inflicted by the hand of her father. She was the first victim of child abuse I knowingly came into contact with, but only one of the millions who fall victim to the epidemic every year in this country. I believe God gifted me with knowing this little girl because she was the first to show me that victims have faces. No longer could I turn a blind eye or believe that victims are just statistics you read about in the newspaper. It was now personal. I am now responsible.

It was through this little girl's pain that I found my voice and my calling. At 15 I committed my life to being a voice for the voiceless. While not many people had much use for an idealistic teenager who wanted to change the world, the Children's Trust Fund of Alabama recognized in me what even I could not see, that one person truly can make a difference. Marion Loftin gave me the forum for my voice to be heard. Together we published and distributed a child abuse awareness manual to each public school teacher and university in Alabama. The CTF helped me get my children's book and coloring book about child abuse published and distributed. Most importantly, the CTF paved the way for me to co-write and lobby a piece of legislation that required the clergy to be mandatory reporters of child abuse. This bill passed and went on to be named after me. I decided to go to law school after finding such empowerment in helping change the law to protect children I knew that I would find an even louder voice through the judicial system. During law school, I worked as a Court Appointed Special Advocate for abused children. I also had the amazing opportunity to help start the Child Ad-

vocacy Center in Troy, Alabama by raising over \$100,000. Along the way I had the honor of meeting a true child advocate, our Attorney General, Troy King. General King has now given me the great opportunity to advocate for our children as the Director of the Family Protection Unit. Daily I am humbled to work alongside General King and the Family Protection Unit to make this state worthy of its children.

A few years ago I received a letter from a foster mother who opens her home to abused children who have been removed from their homes. In this letter she told me about an infant named Michael who came to her after his father punished him for crying by slamming his head against the wall.

From that point on, Michael would lie silent, never making a sound because of what he had experienced for simply doing what babies do. She asked me to be Michael's voice and encouraged me to not get discouraged in my fight because our children so desperately need an advocate I committed to her and I commit to you Alabama that I, along with the Family Protection Unit will continue to fight for our most precious citizens

Blessings,

Kelly Hawkins

A Message from Hallie

Why am I a prosecutor? The simple answer is that it is my calling, but the answer isn't really so simple. In my first year of practice as an attorney, I remember being told that I had to stop caring so much, that I would burn out in three years if I continued to invest so much into the cases and my clients. Ten years later, I am happy to say that the attorney who cautioned me about caring "too much" was wrong. In fact, after almost seven years of private practice, in 2006, I followed my heart and became a prosecutor. Seeking justice for victims has been a true blessing, a cause in which I feel blessed to be given the opportunity to act as champion. In 2007, I was named Chief Assistant District Attorney and was truly honored when I was given the Assistant District Attorney of the Year award last summer. In September of this year, I followed my faith and accepted a position with Attorney General Troy King's Family Protection Unit. I now see that my experience working in the DA's office was simply the beginning to a life-long journey fighting for victims and working to protect Alabamians. Here in the Family Protection Unit, caring "too much" has found its home.

When I think about how I came to be at this place in my life, I remember before law school being teased by family and friends about wanting to pursue public service (rather than wealth). Many cynically joked with me about being one of "those people" who believed they could change the world. They were and still are right. Now more than ever, I believe that we *can* change the world, that we even have a duty of sorts to do so. We change the world by bettering the lives of those around us; by showing love and empathy; by easing the fear and pain of a mother, sister, father, brother, daughter or son, by championing those that cannot fight for themselves. As the mother of a child abuse victim, I know that while justice is what we want, what we need is a champion inside and outside the courtroom. Within General King's Family Protection Unit, I believe I can help change the future by aiding in the Unit's mission to protect our children and can honor those on whose shoulder's we stand by helping protect our elders.

Bless you all,

Hallie S. Dixon

LINKS & RESOURCES

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Attorney General's
Victim Assistance
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www.ago.state.alabama.gov

Alabama Crime Victims
Compensation Commission
(800) 541-9388
(334) 290-4420
www.acvcc.state.al.us

Victims of Crime and Leniency
(VOCAL)
(800) 239-3219
www.vocalonline.org

Alabama Coalition Against
Domestic Violence
(334) 832-4842
www.acadv.org

Mothers Against Drunk Driving
(800) 635-0722
(334) 277-7722
www.madd.org

Alabama Network of Children's Advo-
cacy Centers
(334) 834-3468
www.alabamacacs.org

Alabama Coalition Against Rape
(334) 264-0123
www.acar.org

Ala-VINE
877-846-3425
www.alavine.gov

The Attorney General's Office Receives National Victims Assistance Academy Grant

The Office of Attorney General Troy King was recently awarded a grant to fund the creation of a Victim Assistance Academy. Funded by the U.S. Department of Justice and in partnership with Troy University, the Alabama Academy is designed to reduce the impact of crime on victims' lives by providing access to new programs, information, and resources. It will encourage advocates to respond to the needs of crime victims in Alabama with compassion, respect, and competence. Modeled on the National Victim Assistance Academy's (NVAA) core curriculum and training structure, Alabama's Academy will provide education and training opportunities for victim advocates and allied professionals through a 40-hour curriculum and follow-up activities focused on the needs of the State's crime victim service community. The Academy's curriculum is intended to assure that Alabamians affected by crime receive individualized and effective services by establishing and implementing training standards.

A steering committee composed of representatives from the Attorney General's Office, victim advocacy programs, law enforcement, and the faculty of Troy University will develop the curriculum for the Academy, which will be held in the fall of 2009. Attorney General King said, "Finally, we will be investing in training those who are the voices and advocates for those who often feel most forgotten in our system....victims and survivors of crimes. I am looking forward to this partnership with my alma mater, Troy University. The Department of Criminal Justice and Social Sciences has a reputation of excellence and is at the forefront in educating those who work with the victims of crime in Alabama. This three-year project will develop a curriculum to train advocates for many years to come. This Victim Assistance Academy will improve the plight of victims all across our state."

AlaVINE-Keeping Victims and their Families Informed

Alabama crime victims, their families, and concerned citizens will soon have direct access to offenders' custody status information. Attorney General Troy King and the Alabama Criminal Justice Information Center have partnered to launch AlaVINE a free service that monitors the custody status of offenders in Alabama's county jails.

Users can call a toll-free number, 877-VINE-4-A (877-846-3425) any time of day or night to find out if an offender is in custody and register to be notified upon that offender's release, transfer, or escape from the local jail. The information is also available online at www.alavine.gov.

Registrants only need to provide a telephone number or e-mail address to receive notifications. For phone notifications, they must also provide a four-digit personal identification number that can be used to stop the calls. Once the custody status changes, automated notification calls will go out to those who register. Calls continue over a 48 hour period or until the correct PIN is entered.

AlaVINE is available in both English and Spanish.